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President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 42 (*continued*)

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Report of the Secretary-General (A/54/549)

Draft resolution (A/54/L.63/Rev.1)

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): Four years have passed since the conclusion of the Dayton Agreement, which ended the most devastating and brutal armed conflict in Europe since the end of the Second World War. The ordeal of war in Bosnia brought lessons of global importance. It was a war of aggression against an emerging State, as well as a war of particular brutality. The world was reminded again that genocide — or, as it was named in the case of Bosnia, "ethnic cleansing" — is a real possibility that can happen if the international community fails to help the weak and defenceless or if it prevents them from defending themselves.

The war came to an end in 1995 after a series of military defeats of the forces of aggression. The changed military situation encouraged the international community to intervene with decisive military and political power. The Dayton Peace Agreement created a framework for life in peace and laid down the foundation of the new constitutional structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its conclusion and gradual implementation represent a genuine international achievement.

The General Assembly's current consideration of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is marked by several important and specific features. This year, we have received the Secretary-General's report on Srebrenica. Slovenia welcomes this report and commends the Secretary-General for his detailed, accurate and, above all, honest report. Rarely are the documents of international organizations marked with the candour and moral authority that characterize the report on Srebrenica.

The report explains the fundamental flaws of the concept of safe areas as applied to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which include, first and foremost, the lack of readiness of the international community to protect the safe areas adequately. The report details the mistakes made in the actual tactics of the United Nations peacekeepers in Srebrenica, as well as the conduct of international personnel during the massacre in Srebrenica and immediately after. The truth needs to be told and will have to be told, not only in the United Nations, but everywhere else where international decision-making had been taking place.

The report on Srebrenica also makes it clear that a variety of tasks still lie ahead. The fate of thousands of missing persons still needs to be clarified. The missing are human beings with names, identities and families; they are not mere statistics. Their fate will continue to haunt the United Nations. Furthermore, the United Nations must ensure that mistakes made in Srebrenica and other safe areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina are not

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repeated in any other part of the world. The international community must never again allow itself not to intervene in the imminent danger of humanitarian catastrophe.

The other characteristics of the present debate are marked by the gradual progress in the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Nothing symbolizes that progress better than the recent visit of the members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina to New York on 15 November this year and their participation at the meeting of the Security Council the same day. Their visit resulted in the New York Declaration. That Declaration has reconfirmed the commitment of the Presidency to the key tasks in the implementation of peace, including the strengthening of the common institutions, the establishment of the state border service and the establishment of conditions for foreign investments and for the creation of new jobs and other tasks. The New York Declaration and the statements of the members of the Presidency at the meeting of the Security Council represent an important political contribution to the consolidation and strengthening of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, they represent a powerful symbol of the vitality of the institution of the Presidency, which is at the core of efforts to strengthen the state structures in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The third specific characteristic of the current efforts for peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the creation and functioning of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, which has, in the five months of its existence, completed the important evolution from political declaration to operational international mechanism. The Stability Pact offers a unique opportunity for the further stabilization and strengthening of peace in Bosnia in a wider, subregional context. Furthermore, it also gives specific meaning to the notion that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a European country and that the practical solutions for its future clearly lie within the process of European integration. Slovenia supports the efforts for Bosnia's integration into all relevant European institutions, beginning with the Council of Europe. The advantages of that integration would be considerable and we urge all concerned to expedite the process towards that end.

There are many specific tasks which need to be accomplished in the near future. Slovenia considers particularly pressing the problem of demining, which is one of the bases for the normalization of life in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Successful demining will enable a more adequate return of refugees and help to restore economic activity in the country. These are some of the reasons why Slovenia established the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina in March 1998. The main purpose of the initiative is humanitarian — to help victims of mines, as well as other victims of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today, a year and a half after its establishment, the Fund has already established itself as a successful instrument, with considerable achievements and potential to help in Bosnia and Herzegovina and elsewhere in the region.

Firmness and determination are necessary in all aspects of peace-building in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Slovenia is of the view that all those who committed crimes against humanity and are responsible for or participated in the genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina must be brought to justice. Until then, the process of reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina will be significantly constrained. We commend the efforts of the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in bringing justice to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Justice is a necessary condition for the establishment of durable peace. We are pleased to note the willingness on the part of the High Representative and the Commander of the Stabilization Force to use their authority to enforce the provisions of the Peace Agreement, including the provisions concerning compliance with the orders of the Tribunal.

Another aspect of the efforts to secure peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina relates to its relations with the other successor States of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which has ceased to exist. It is essential that those relations be based upon the strictest respect for the principle of equality among all five successor States. Only the strictest respect for and full implementation of this principle can guarantee the basis of political stability and the preservation of the fragile balance in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This principle has been stressed at every session of the General Assembly since the conclusion of the Peace Agreement and is of particular relevance today, when there exists a genuine possibility of ensuring the irreversible character of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize the importance of the continued interest of the United Nations and its General Assembly in post-conflict peace-building in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a global issue, it must remain the concern of the world's foremost political body: the United Nations General Assembly. We hope that the draft resolution to be adopted by the General Assembly today will guide the action of all those

involved in the effort to establish just and durable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Egyptian delegation is pleased to be a co-sponsor of the draft resolution on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, before the General Assembly today under agenda item 42.

Not only does the draft resolution contain objective and important provisions; it also emphasizes the General Assembly's ongoing attention to this issue and thus reflects the importance attached by the international community, which we represent, to the follow-up of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its commitment to supporting the peace process in that country, whose peoples have suffered so terribly in recent years. The General Assembly's adoption of the draft resolution today would also undoubtedly confirm its role in pursuing the implementation of the Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the extent to which the parties will respect their commitments to and responsibilities towards the Agreement. Lastly, the draft resolution stresses the continuous role of the United Nations, reflected today in the presence of a civilian Mission in the field, to contribute to efforts to restore peace and stability to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region as a whole.

The Egyptian position regarding the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is based on a number of constants confirmed by the Dayton Peace Agreement. First, the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a unified State composed of two ethnic entities, must be respected. Secondly, human rights in Bosnia, including the right of refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes in safety and peace, must be observed and upheld. Thirdly, persons responsible for war crimes in Bosnia should be brought to justice, as an integral component of the success of the implementation of the Peace Agreement. It is also important to encourage all States and parties concerned to cooperate fully with the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, created by the Security Council towards this end.

In stressing the need to prosecute war criminals in Bosnia, I must also refer to the Secretary-General's report on the fall of Srebrenica. This report emphasizes the direct responsibility of Karadzic and Mladic who are sought for trial that they orchestrated massacres during the fall of that safe area which claimed many victims, including 2,500 Muslims from the region. The report also mentions thousands of others who are still missing. This is a dark and sad episode in the history of contemporary European civilization, and the fact that these people have not yet been brought to justice still weighs on the conscience of the international community as a whole.

While recognizing the direct responsibility of war criminals for the crimes committed in Srebrenica, the Secretary-General's report, whose candour and thorough preparation we highly commend, clearly indicates that the responsibility for the events that occurred must be shared. The Security Council, the members of the western Contact Group and other Governments that contributed to the delay in the use of force were partly responsible, as were the Secretariat and the field mission. As we read the report, we note the flagrant errors of judgement cited, the flawed assessment of the situation and the mistakes made by field mission officers and in the way events were presented to the Security Council and the international community on many occasions and through many resolutions. The report also shows how the means decided on by Security Council members and Member States to confront the development of events in Bosnia in general, and Srebrenica in particular, were insufficient and inadequate. All of this is most serious and grave.

Member States and the Secretariat must work together to assess the situation, examine it and consider it objectively in order to draw the necessary lessons, so that such events never recur.

We again commend the Secretary-General for his excellent report on Srebrenica. Paragraph 15 of the resolution before us today also encourages the Secretary-General and the Member States to address these concerns. We hope this paragraph will be implemented as soon as possible.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): Yesterday, the history of modern Europe marked the fifth year since the signing in Paris of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Over the last year, we have witnessed a number of important events aimed at moving the implementation of the Dayton accords forward. First of all, let me recall the adoption of the Madrid Declaration of 1998, the Fifth Donor Conference held in Brussels in May 1999 and the July summit held in Sarajevo to launch the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe.

We consider the recently adopted New York Declaration by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Joint

Presidency to be a milestone document, in which the three members reiterated their commitment to the Dayton accords and to the establishment of a sovereign and multi-ethnic State, integrated into Europe. If fully implemented, this document will substantially promote the peace process. The earliest establishment of a State border service, the improvement of inter-entity military cooperation, including the formation of joint units to participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations, and the creation of a single national passport are of particular significance.

In the context of key events of 1999, one should also mention the Final Arbitration Award on Brcko. We believe that the implementation of the decision on that sensitive issue to the satisfaction of all the parties concerned could really strengthen unity among the peoples of the country and could become a pilot project for the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina could be endangered and the consolidation of society will hardly be achievable unless the economic reconstruction of the whole country is ensured. To that end, the Sarajevo Stability Pact is of the utmost importance. It provides an ample chance for Bosnia and Herzegovina to speed up its economic recovery and the overall process of transformation to integrate it more closely into the European family of nations. Moreover, this document provides a solid regional framework for the economic reconstruction of the Balkans as a whole. My country stands ready to get involved in the economic programmes currently being carried out in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as to take an active part in the implementation of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. We strongly believe that; as a Danube riparian State directly affected by the economic sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the recent Kosovo crisis, my country should be involved in this ongoing process of regional economic reconstruction.

The problem of the return of refugees and displaced persons to Bosnia and Herzegovina probably remains the most acute. In spite of an encouraging tendency towards the increasing voluntary return of national minorities over the last 12 months, the return of displaced people and refugees has not been sufficient, especially to the urban areas.

We hope that the establishment of a joint commission of entities with international representation to establish refugee return priorities to urban areas, as envisaged in the New York Declaration, will be instrumental to that end. It is also our strong belief that the property rights of all national minorities, including ethnic Ukrainians, will be restored.

My delegation is convinced that strong leadership on the part of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina and his experienced and dedicated team is a prerequisite for further progress in the peace process. In this regard, Ukraine lends its full support to the newly appointed High Representative, Mr. Wolfgang Petritsch, who assumed his office last August. My country is encouraged by the first steps undertaken by the High Representative with a view to completing the Dayton accords, in particular, the elaboration of a package of property legislation reforms imposed on 27 October 1999, a strategic concept of "ownership" and a new draft election law. Undoubtedly, the adoption and implementation of all these crucial measures will facilitate solving the problems of refugees, economic recovery and strengthening democracy.

The delegation of Ukraine holds the view that the multinational Stabilization Force (SFOR) continues to remain an essential factor both for keeping peace and for providing the secure environment needed for the civilian implementation of the Peace Agreement. With this in mind, Ukraine welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1247 (1999) authorizing the extension of the mandate of SFOR for an additional 12 months.

Inasmuch as further progress in implementing the Peace Agreement in Bosnia largely depends on fulfilling its civilian aspects, Ukraine is convinced that the role of the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) and those of the other bodies of the United Nations family should increase. The efforts of the Mission in establishing the rule of law and justice, strengthening democratic institutions, building civil society based on the principles of good governance and addressing humanitarian needs remain vital for creating self-sustaining peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina and throughout the region.

As a country contributor to the International Police Task Force (IPTF), Ukraine welcomed the extension by the Security Council of its mandate for an additional period, until mid-2000.

We praise the activities of Ms. Elizabeth Rehn as the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Coordinator of United Nations Operations in Bosnia. I would also like to welcome the appointment of her successor, Mr. Jacques Paul Klein, to that post. His

first-hand experience, both in Balkan affairs in general and as Principal Deputy High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina in particular, give us hope for further success.

I cannot but commend the outstanding job done by the Secretary-General and the Secretariat in submitting a truly comprehensive and courageous report on the fall of Srebrenica (A/54/549). My delegation was really shocked by the horrifying facts detailed in the Secretary-General's report about the circumstances of 1995 in and around Srebrenica and Žepa. There is no doubt that the responsibility of the perpetrators of crimes against humanity in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina is inescapable, irrespective of how much time has elapsed. Sooner or later they must face the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

What was most important for us in this report was its recognition of the common responsibility of the United Nations and the entire international community for allowing the tragic course of events to happen, and its conclusions for the future, based on the lessons learned, with a view to ensuring that such failures will never come again.

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina left behind many wounds that cannot be healed in four years. That will take much more time. The way ahead is difficult, but it is clear. The peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina should keep moving in pursuit of the fulfilment of the Peace Agreement. However, the key role of the United Nations and of the entire international community in this process remains indispensable.

My delegation views the content of the draft resolution before us today as one more demonstration of the international commitment to assist the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina in establishing a peaceful and united, democratic and prosperous country. Therefore, my delegation will be pleased to join in the traditional consensus adoption of the draft resolution without a vote.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): At the outset, let me reiterate Norway's strong support for the Dayton Peace Agreement as the only feasible basis for lasting peace and economic development in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Agreement is also a fundamental prerequisite for stability in the region. This is not a time for revision, but rather for sustained collective efforts to implement what was agreed upon in Dayton and in Paris in 1995.

We recognize the difficulties in building a unitary, multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country must confront several challenges at the same time: reconstruction in the aftermath of a debilitating war, and reform of the economic, political and administrative systems. A whole new ethos of civic society must be developed. The international community can and must assist in these daunting processes. But major tasks must necessarily be solved by the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina themselves.

Central institutions remain weak. Norway encourages political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina to work together in order to achieve a coherent and unified central State apparatus where there is no room for domination. The principles of democratic pluralism based on the mutual respect for legitimate interests must govern cooperation within this central structure. The signing of the New York Declaration by the Joint Presidency last month is a promising step in that regard.

The international community has shown generosity in its support for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since 1991 Norway has provided $300 million in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance in the Balkans, predominantly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, Norway has over the years been among the major contributors of personnel to United Nations and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This attests to our commitment to the peace process and to a better, safer and more prosperous future for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Our commitment stands firm. At the same time, as has been made clear at the last two meetings of the Peace Implementation Council, the support of the international community is not unconditional and cannot be indefinite in duration.

The peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not yet self-sustaining. Norway is concerned by evidence of systematic obstructionism at municipal levels of government. Norway supports the efforts of the High Representative to ensure compliance with the Peace Agreement and to counter obstructionist forces in the two entities. The preliminary results of the joint operation of the Stabilization Force (SFOR) and the International Police Task Force (IPTF) in Mostar clearly shows that the peace process continues to be under threat. This underscores the need for close cooperation and coordination under the aegis of the High Representative.

Despite the progress made with regard to minority refugee returns last year, much more remains to be done. Problems remain, for example, in Banja Luka and in

Sarajevo. The High Representative's property legislation implementation plan is an important step forward in a more proactive approach to the issue of refugee return. Norway will continue to support practical measures for the implementation of the return process. Greater efforts must be made to create a functioning market economy, to remove the remaining vestiges of the former system of planned economy and to encourage private investments. Norway commends the efforts of the Anti-Fraud Unit of the Office of the High Representative and urges the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to work closely with the High Representative.

The continued presence of persons indicted for war crimes by the International Tribunal is an affront to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Norway joins previous speakers in demanding full cooperation with the Tribunal. This is fundamental to the process of reconciliation and the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

The Secretary-General's report on Srebrenica makes sombre reading. Norway wishes to commend the Secretary-General for his initiative and for the clarity with which the report has been written. The report underscores yet again the moral imperative that persons indicted for war crimes should face justice in The Hague.

This month, December, marks the end of the Norwegian chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in what has been a challenging year, not least in the Balkans. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the OSCE has continued its activities in the fields of democracy-building, elections, human rights and regional stabilization.

In line with the recommendations of the Peace Implementation Council, the Norwegian chairmanship of the OSCE has underlined the need to make contributions to strengthening the peace process and to building democratic and market-oriented institutions, with the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina increasingly assuming responsibility for the functions now undertaken by the international community. Progress has been made, but the chairmanship is concerned that the underlying political differences have not been resolved. Vigorous steps have recently been taken by the OSCE and by the rest of the international community to set the stage for further progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The next stage is crucial. What is needed now is for the elected officials to take ownership of the peace process and to move it along themselves.

Our experiences in south-eastern Europe demonstrate the need for an integrated approach to the Balkan region. An important area of priority for the Norwegian chairmanship of the OSCE has therefore been to contribute to the development of regional measures within the context of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. Norway is committed to continued vigorous support for the realization of the goals of the Stability Pact, including after our chairmanship of the OSCE has come to an end.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution before us, I should like to announce that since the introduction of draft resolution A/54/L.63/Rev.1, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Canada, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Netherlands, Senegal and the United Arab Emirates.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/54/L.63/Rev.1, as orally corrected.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution, as orally corrected?

Draft resolution A/54/L.63/Rev.1, as orally corrected, was adopted (resolution 54/119).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 42.

Agenda item 38

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

The President: I would like to make a brief introductory statement on agenda item 38. I felt the need to make this statement in order to reflect on some matters arising out of the extensive consultations on this subject which I have conducted with Member States.

By launching the process of reforming, restructuring and democratizing the United Nations in its totality, including specifically the reform of the Security Council and an and increase in its membership, Member States have accepted change. Taking it a step further, I should add that this acceptance has now become a common

commitment. During the consultations that I carried out, I found repeated reiteration of that commitment, and no indication to the contrary. Member States offered me ideas and suggestions that were meant to help me and my collaborators in preparing for the meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council, which I intend to convene early next year.

I am happy to point out that I have been encouraged by the open and frank views that I encountered and by the expressed willingness to contribute constructively in the continuing search for workable solutions to overcome the major sticking points on the basis of constructive negotiations, flexibility and compromise. I am convinced that credible progress has been made.

But there is also an impasse on certain critical issues. This is without doubt a most ambitious course of action, which all Member States have embraced and sustained for the past six years. It is a noble cause which speaks to the very heart and soul and efficacy of our Organization.

The United Nations community has much to be proud of in that a vision for change and rebirth of the United Nations has been kept burning in spite of the vagaries of multilateral negotiations, as well as the vexing problems of policy. That said, I am of the view that the Member States are not quite ready now for concentrated negotiations and for the final package deal. Instead, I am expected, for now, to continue the consultations beyond this point, bearing in mind the forthcoming meeting of the Open-ended Working Group that I am planning to convene in the early part of 2000. I do not therefore expect any concrete conclusions to come out of this debate at this time. I will, however, be listening for helpful ideas and suggestions from the speakers.

In this connection, I have requested two able Vice-Presidents, Ambassador John de Saram, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, and Ambassador Hans Dahlgren, Permanent Representative of Sweden, to stay on and they have kindly accepted.

I would like to express my admiration and gratitude to my worthy predecessors for having been such devoted negotiators and skilful interlocutors, without whose leadership we may not have reached this crucial benchmark.

Let me once again emphasize here the imperative need for scheduled consultations among the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council and the Secretary-General to ensure better coordination and mutual support at all times.

The Assembly has before it the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council, contained in document A/53/47. It goes without saying that all of us agree on the need to reform and enlarge the Security Council in all respects in order for that vital United Nations organ to reflect the changes of the modern world and be responsive to the wishes of all the United Nations Member States in the spirit of equality and justice. The difficulty is in deciding how this should be brought about and how such changes will assure the equality, representativity, transparency and effectiveness we all want.

Collective human ingenuity created the United Nations in 1945. That ingenuity is still here and is better informed than ever before. What is lacking today is political will. Granted, this is one of the thorniest issues before our Organization today, but we could do better in the interest of progress. I have endeavoured to elicit views from many delegations and explored practical ways and means by which we can move forward on this difficult but clearly unavoidable issue of paramount importance to every one of the Member States and the international community as a whole.

Some delegations expressed reservations on holding this meeting of the Assembly. They strongly argued that, without an agreement on the final package, the whole exercise would be a waste of time and could even be counterproductive. Others, with equal force of passion, insisted that it was most important to provide delegations with an opportunity at this stage to reiterate their support of the United Nations, including specifically to express themselves on the equitable representation on and enlargement of the membership of the Security Council, particularly at the century's end and on the eve of the birth of the millennium. Not only is the credibility of the United Nations itself at stake, but this will also be the best way to further assist the President and the Bureau on the crucial cluster I and cluster II issues, as well as on that of the exercise of the veto.

I noted all those arguments and reflected on what is best for the United Nations. In the end, I chose my own

side as the President of the General Assembly. I believe the debate will be useful to everyone. I did so, moreover, in the interest of ensuring progress and promoting transparency. I am convinced that we stand to gain rather than to lose by providing the States Members of the General Assembly with another opportunity to debate this item in the Assembly without preconceived prescriptions, conditions or preferences: no quick fix, but no tortured Uruguay-Round style, endless negotiations either. I feel vindicated by the long list of speakers who have inscribed themselves under item 38.

As we gaze to the future, the United Nations stands at an historical crossroads and is called upon to face the new millennium in unity and confidence and with renewed determination to create a better world. What we do here should be inspired by that vision. I would appeal to all delegations to use this opportunity to offer constructive ideas and insights that will help move the process forward for the good of all. In this, I hope it will be possible for delegations to think in a holistic way and to bring the day closer when the final package can be finalized.

Let me conclude by appealing to all delegations to be kind enough to also cooperate with me and assist my Bureau in the preparations for the envisaged meeting of the Working Group in the early part of 2000. I will be most grateful to one and all. The meeting of the Working Group must deal only and specifically with the substance and matters directly related to it and avoid at all cost another general debate.

Mr. Jusys (Lithuania): Allow me at the outset to thank you, Sir, for your introductory remarks and for the decision to submit this item for debate in the plenary.

The United Nations is like a human being: conceived, born, growing, maturing and ultimately trying to delay ageing. A healthy child grows proportionally in all body parts; impaired growth can be very serious. Regular body growth, unaccompanied by the proper development of the brain, results in retardation — a heavy burden for a society.

If the General Assembly is a torso and the Security Council is the brain, we have a medical history of a steadily growing torso and stagnant brains. The United Nations is confronted by increasingly sophisticated realities without stronger capacities to address them. In this case, we do not diagnose retardation, but the situation is disturbing.

My comparison is not meant to be offensive. The best minds work in the Council. Problems arise not from lack of intellect, but rather from structural reasons arising out of representation issues. This year, the United Nations membership has grown to 188. We added three more seats to the General Assembly and its committees. The Security Council Chamber has more physical space, but less will to grow. And that is the problem.

A profound reform of the Security Council is overdue. It was due even before we started this discussion six years ago and it is even more so today. Some of us hoped that something would happen before the turn of the century, and it did not. This does not mean, however, that we now have another century for discussion. The need for reform is urgent, and not only because States want to be in the Council more often or for longer terms. Improvement of the Council's work should also bring about quicker and better responses to the security threats which put thousands of lives at stake.

For quite some time, the dilemma of the Security Council's enlargement was being presented as one of representation versus efficiency. Such a juxtaposition is wrong. There is no contradiction between representativity and efficiency. On the contrary, the correlation between the two is positive. There is an undeniable merit in the argument that proper enlargement of the Security Council would enhance its efficiency. A correctly and fairly balanced membership would accord greater legitimacy to the Council, and hence garner greater authority and respect for it worldwide. Too often, we have seen conflicts go unresolved because good decisions of the Security Council are ignored by conflicting sides. I firmly stand by my conviction, expressed here last year, that the savings from resolving even one single additional international conflict or crisis would justify the longest debate on the reform of the Security Council.

The intellectual *acquis* of the Open-ended Working Group is impressive and sufficient to craft a number of acceptable solutions should there be the political will to do so. We have argued that it is time to move from discussions to negotiations and decisions. Current discussions revolve around the same ideas, with too few novelties. In 1997 the so-called Razali proposal was just the right, though not necessarily the only, basis to start negotiations. We saw it as embracing all key elements supported by the biggest achievable majorities without prejudice to final outcomes of negotiations. I feel that our circular motions may lead us back to the gist of that proposal.

We have stated the Lithuanian position on all reform aspects, most recently in our written reply to the letter of the former Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group and President of the General Assembly, Mr. Opertti, of 22 June 1999. Lithuania's position has not changed and needs no detailed repetition. It retains flexibility for the common goal. The fundamental component of that position is a search for compromises which are achievable on all topics, even the most difficult. Lithuania identified areas of achievable compromises and offered possible solutions, including enlargement of both categories of membership, the size of the Security Council, the review mechanism, regional rotation, the veto and everything else.

In short, Lithuania, *inter alia*, supports these elements: a Security Council enlarged to around 24 members, enlargement in both categories, new permanent seats for industrialized and developing countries, regional rotation for those regions that agree on the concept, effective review, further and constant democratization and "transparentization" of the Security Council's methods of work, and the curtailment and eventual abolition of the veto.

Debates in the Open-ended Working Group have exposed an obvious crystallization of views among overwhelming majorities on most of these issues. Thus, for instance, we know of no more than two or three States that oppose exceeding a membership of 21. The advocacy against a substantially bigger Council is considerable only because of the threat of veto behind it — yet another difficulty of reform.

Interestingly, no other exercise has revealed the outdatedness of the veto better than the discussions in the Open-ended Working Group. Member States have repeatedly described the unfortunate paradox whereby the major obstacle to reforming the veto is the veto itself. In real life, self-perpetuating constitutions and rulers who do not allow amendments of or challenges to their powers are usually called undemocratic. Measured against this standard, the veto is no less undemocratic. And the worse side of it is that it governs relations among States through the most important international document: the United Nations Charter.

There are at least three reasons why the veto should be abolished. First, it is undemocratic in principle under all circumstances. Secondly, it has been abused and used in cases irrelevant to the maintenance of international peace and security. Thirdly, even if used as prescribed by the Charter, the veto has hardly helped the peace worldwide; rather, it has cost lives, as in the case of Rwanda.

I have dwelled more extensively on the veto not only because it is the main stumbling block to reform, but also because it affects the reform process itself. There will have to be an eventual solution to this puzzle, and the sooner the better.

Your predecessors, Sir, worked hard for progress in the Working Group. They established an atmosphere conducive to intellectual exercise and an abundant legacy of good ideas. This time, we urge you to set a result-oriented climate. For that purpose, you will have our full and active support.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): Before continuing, may I welcome most warmly the introductory remarks you, Sir, have just made following your contacts in the lead-up to today's debate and to our future work in the Open-ended Working Group. I agree with your wise comments and conclusions in their entirety. They reflect a measured but committed approach to our work, one fully shared by the Irish delegation.

In continuing, I wish to congratulate your predecessor, Foreign Minister Opertti of Uruguay, as well as the two Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group, Ambassadors Dahlgren and De Saram, for the splendid work which they have done on our behalf. The report which we are considering here today is as much the fruit of their labours as it is of our collective efforts to record the work of the past 12 months.

For those beyond these halls not fortunate enough to have participated in the work of the Open-ended Working Group, the report itself contains only some of the erudition, analysis, drama and even humour of many of the sessions. We have to examine the 14 annexes attached to the report, as well as those attached to past reports, to gain a measure of the depth of our discussions.

Regrettably, there is no record of the wisdom of departing colleagues who presented the Group with their farewell thoughts on the process and, of course, the substance of the work of the Group. Nevertheless, the report, and in particular the section entitled "General observations" — a welcome innovation — does provide some useful pointers not only to those issues which remain the most divisive, but, more importantly, to

elements which could be useful in giving impulse to our further work.

So, six years on from the establishment of the Working Group, can we say that we have made progress? Are we any closer to finding a formula which would enjoy the level of support which, as a minimum, we set down in Assembly resolution 53/30?

In answer to these questions, I think the first point I would like to make is that the ground has been well covered by the Working Group once again. The series of questions which were presented by the Bureau and contained in a letter sent by the Chairman of the Working Group elicited a large number of oral and written responses, including some from delegations which had not previously expressed their positions so fully. It is the level of detail in these statements that is such a significant development.

My delegation believes that this kind of procedure was a pragmatic and useful one in that it encouraged delegations to respond in a focused manner to some of the key questions which we must address if significant progress is to be made. It also helped, although perhaps not conclusively, to show the level of support which exists for various proposed reforms, including on such central issues as expansion in one or both categories of membership and, of course, the veto.

Ireland would hope that those delegations which have not yet responded to the questions might consider doing so before the Working Group reconvenes. Their replies would, I am sure, be welcomed by you, Sir, and would allow us all to have a fuller appreciation of the concerns and priorities of as many delegations as possible. Substantial differences of view remain among the membership on key issues — issues, which, as the report rightly acknowledges, affect the vital national interests of States. It will therefore be difficult to move towards the negotiation of a comprehensive package until some political understanding has been reached on how to address these.

Few can doubt that the need for reform is any less pressing now than it was six years ago. Notwithstanding the very welcome developments that there have been in opening up meetings of the Council, it would be wrong to ignore the more substantive reforms that are still needed. This debate today, with well over 70 speakers, is a clear indication of the concern of the membership and the importance which they attach to it.

In the meetings that you, Sir, have had with many of us over the past few weeks, you have expressed concern about the deadlock in which we find ourselves. Our inability to find solutions or even to make modest progress on the more complex and sensitive issues is indeed frustrating and suggests a serious lack of momentum in our efforts. You have indicated to some of us that when the Working Group reconvenes in the new year, it should turn its attention to those areas where, with some hard work, agreement might emerge.

Allow me to be among the first of today's speakers to wholeheartedly endorse such an approach. By focusing on issues on which a narrowing of views might be possible, we can, I believe, regain a much-needed sense of momentum. This may help propel us towards a package of measures around which general agreement could form.

However, success in achieving that goal will require an understanding among us about how we tackle the very important issues on which a solution is still far off; the veto question, for example, springs immediately to mind. This complex and at times emotional issue has been at the heart of our deliberations over the last six years. It overshadows the way in which the Security Council reaches decisions and for that reason it has absorbed so much of the time of the Working Group. Many speakers in this year's general debate selected the veto issue as one of the most important problems to be addressed in the context of Security Council reform. It is, as we all recognize, one of the most difficult issues to be addressed because of its innate political sensitivity.

When we were thinking about our contribution to today's debate, we, too, considered singling out the veto issue as meriting a detailed examination next year. Allow me to recall that Ireland, together with a group of small and medium-sized countries, has worked hard to suggest steps which might be helpful in limiting the use of the veto — steps that did not require Charter amendment.

The Irish delegation believes firmly that, unless there is some restriction in the use or the threat of use of the veto, the process of reform of the Security Council will be incomplete and justifiably open to public criticism.

However, on further reflection, the veto question might not be the most appropriate issue on which to devote inordinate attention if we are being encouraged to seek out areas where agreement might come more easily.

We cannot ignore the issue — this would be unacceptable to my delegation and to many others — but we could usefully turn our attention to those matters on which broad agreement might more easily be reached.

The question of a periodic review of any decisions taken is one area which could profitably be explored. There is broad agreement for its inclusion as an integral part of any reform package. Agreement among us on its scope and content might be a useful confidence-building measure which could facilitate consensus in other areas. I hope we could also look at some of the other issues in this cluster which have not yet been adopted by the Council, for example Articles 31 and 32 of the Charter.

The working methods of the Council and the issues grouped under cluster II have certainly proved a more fertile ground for finding agreement among us. I have already acknowledged the innovations which the Council has adopted in making its proceedings more transparent and encouraging greater participation by non-members. When we look again at the work which has been done under cluster II, we should incorporate these innovations.

The number of open debates in the Security Council has dramatically increased, even in the short time that I have been here. Some of these have been of mixed value. For one thing, it strikes me as rather impolite to non-members for pre-negotiated presidential statements to be adopted by the Council on the same day as the open debate. These will have been drafted and agreed without having taken into account the views presented by non-members in their contributions to the open debate.

A recently departed colleague, in his last statement to the Working Group, gave a wise and salutary warning when he said that the Council should not become a second General Assembly. He also called for more orientation debates, which he believed would help in the shaping of Council decisions. I fully agree with him. We must not pretend that, like the proverbial "apple a day", an open debate a month will alone keep the non-members happy and healthy.

The past year has seen examples of action being taken outside the Security Council. This leads to an erosion of the authority of the Council and a diminution of its unique role under the Charter in the maintenance of international peace and security. An expansion in the size of the Council, particularly if it includes new permanent members, as Ireland believes it should, will not in itself prevent this from happening again. However, if expansion is coupled with reform of the decision-making machinery — including, in some way or other, the veto — the danger of this occurring would be greatly reduced.

It is vital for a reformed Security Council to function in the interests of the Organization as a whole and not from the narrower perspective of its individual members. The sooner we are able to complete this reform exercise, the sooner we will be able to reach that goal.

In undertaking that task, I can assure you, Sir, of the full and active support of the Irish delegation.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): In 1945, the founding Members of the United Nations declared, in the Charter, their faith in "the equal rights of ... nations large and small", and based the Organization on "the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members". Today we continue to value the principle that States are sovereign equals. Simultaneously, we have to recognize that different States have different attributes that are instrumental in determining their contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security.

However, we must also remind ourselves that Members of the United Nations conferred upon members of the Security Council, especially the five permanent members, the solemn duty of acting to prevent war and to promote peace. Article 24 of the Charter states that

> "Members confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf".

Clearly, States Members of the United Nations did this with the understanding that the members of the Security Council, especially the permanent members, would act on behalf of humanity and for the common good of all Member States. Those who agreed to the creation of the Security Council understood the special responsibility that the Charter describes as

> "discharging these duties ... in accordance with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations ... laid down in Chapters VI, VII, VIII and XII".

Democracy is a value that is cherished in South Africa and elsewhere in the world. In his speech at the

outset of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, President Mbeki stated that

> "The mere spread of democracy throughout the world speaks of a greater commitment among the nations to the resolution of national and international conflicts by peaceful means". (*A/54/PV.4, p. 9*)

My delegation believes that democracy requires equal opportunity in representation and in participation. The United Nations should be a model for such basic equality. It is for this reason that the Security Council should be an institution that has the courage to exercise consistency and political will to work towards a democratic system of international relations. To further quote President Mbeki,

> "If indeed we are seriously committed to these critical objectives of peace and democracy in the world, then we have no excuse to permit the further postponement of the meaningful restructuring of the United Nations". (*ibid.*)

The Security Council continues to have an important and necessary role to play in the maintenance of international peace and security. Because of its special responsibility in accepting the challenge to maintain peace for all of humanity, it is imperative for the Council to retain its moral authority and legitimacy in acting in the interests of all Member States. Otherwise, its actions could be seen to be driven by the exercise of power.

Already, in some parts of the world, especially in Africa, the Security Council is seen as being an uninterested and immovable body which is only aroused into action when conflicts around the world become so brutal and bloody that they cannot escape the attention of an equally selective world media, with its influence on world opinion.

The difficulty for the Security Council is that it was initially organized with the stated intention of dealing with post-Second-World-War conflicts between States. In the past decade, the Council has found itself compelled to deal with post-cold-war intra-State conflicts. As this new form of threat to global security and international peace and stability increases, a reformed Security Council will have to accommodate the new demands placed on it and be able to adapt itself to the new realities of the new millennium.

Obviously, it is a complex matter to try and reform such an entrenched institution as the Security Council. Perhaps some delegations may feel that it is better to accept the status quo than to try to change it. But the global situation warrants change and calls on each delegation to rise above national interests. We all need to commit ourselves to the task of preparing the United Nations for the twenty-first century.

South Africa supports the well-known African position that a legitimate Security Council must be more representative in regional terms and must include at least two African permanent members. We wish to state further that the new members in a reformed Security Council should share the same rights and privileges as current ones.

My delegation recognizes and acknowledges the important steps taken over the past six years to make the working methods of the Security Council more transparent and more participatory. In this regard, we welcome the efforts made by various Security Council Presidents to improve the involvement of non-members in the work of the Council. Whilst participation in open debates and briefings from the Secretariat and other expert delegations is very useful, we would especially welcome more openness with regard to the actual decision-making process of the Council. Far too many informal meetings of the Council are still held behind closed doors.

The Security Council's provisional rules of procedure are necessary for the smooth functioning of the Council. However, we hope that these rules will not remain provisional and that the procedures will make the Council's work more transparent.

Through the many debates that have taken place during this time, it has become clear that the details, rather than the principle, of reform have bedeviled this body. We hope that during this session, Member States will show flexibility and political vision so that we can enter the new millennium with hope for a more credible and more legitimate Security Council. My delegation feels that it would be most unfortunate if we were to continue this debate into a seventh year and still discuss the same issues introduced in the first year.

My delegation is always ready, Mr. President, to work with you and the Bureau to try and move this process away from where we have been stuck for many years. We believe that it will take collective political will exercised by all Member States to give meaning and effect to the achievement of the noble aspirations of equality which are enshrined in the United Nations

Charter. We remain willing to be of any assistance in this process.

Mr. Adam (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I wish first of all to thank you, Sir, for organizing this debate. I know that this was not a self-evident decision and that you gave careful consideration to the best way to lend fresh impetus to discussions which, we are obliged to admit, have not to date produced much by way of concrete results.

But you are not starting from scratch: you have a foundation on which to build, thanks to the work of your predecessors in the presidency, especially Mr. Didier Opertti and his Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council, Ambassadors Hans Dahlgren and John de Saram, to whom I express my gratitude.

As members know, my delegation is chairman of a group of 10 countries that, while harbouring no ambitions of their own, are seeking a formula for reform of the Security Council that brings together the views of the largest possible number of delegations. Our positions and our proposals are well known and I shall not rehearse them now. While the six years of work in the Open-ended Working Group may not have yielded progress, they have at least enabled us to know the positions and proposals of all participants.

One cloud hanging over our work was lifted during the fifty-third session: by adopting resolution 53/30 of 23 November 1998, the Assembly eliminated the danger that reforms could be adopted by a non-representative majority and permanently swept aside grounds for the distrust — exaggerated, in my opinion — that had marred our discussions. My delegation is thus convinced that it would not be very useful to reconvene the Open-ended Working Group for a general debate that would inevitably be repetitions.

But it seems to me, Sir, that you have shown the way by preceding the present debate with informal consultations with the representatives of countries or groups of countries. Perhaps I might suggest, in keeping with your introductory statement today, that such consultations should continue and be expanded so that when the Open-ended Working Group resumes its work we will be able immediately to address specific issues. For the same reason, I wish also to suggest that we continue something that began, albeit timidly, during the fifty-third session: a questionnaire that would enable us clearly to identify areas of reform on which agreement seems possible. Only 30 delegations responded to last year's questionnaire, because many believed that they had stated their positions orally in the Working Group and that a written response was thus no longer necessary.

But I believe that a written response is indeed necessary. The work of the Group is followed only by delegations with enough members and enough time to participate. Last year we made considerable progress by encouraging input from countries that had previously remained silent. I believe that widespread use of the questionnaire would enable smaller delegations to participate regularly by making their positions known. This would not only result in greater clarity, but would also contribute to greater universality in this undertaking and would provide the fresh impetus we need. Without such impetus, we will slip back into our rut and will come to deserve the nickname of the "Open-ended Never-ending Working Group".

When he addressed the General Assembly in September, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, Mr. Louis Michel, said that the institution of the Security Council is in danger of losing respect and gradually relinquishing its authority if it is not reformed to take account of present-day realities. Failure to reform poses the obvious danger of disaffection and a loss of motivation among Member States.

There are matters that certain Member States consider to be untouchable; the veto is one example. It is true that, legally speaking, the permanent members of the Council could indefinitely block any reform of the right of veto. That may be legally true, but it is politically untenable. Other reforms would be easier to achieve. Some are already being practised without any actual reform having been needed. Examples are more publicity, greater openness and improved access to the Council's debates for countries concerned. I believe that we could fairly quickly develop a text reflecting concrete progress on working methods. Other issues have not been studied sufficiently, such as that relating to a periodic review of the membership of the Council. This is of paramount importance to give the Council structure the flexibility and credibility it needs. That is why we must pursue our work without preconceived notions and without excluding anything.

I voice the fervent hope, Sir, that under your presidency, at the dawn of a new millennium, the prospect for reform will finally open up in a concrete and convincing way.

Ms. Foo (Singapore): In less than a month's time, we will be witnessing the historic turn of the millennium. The dawn of the twenty-first century, of which many of us and our forefathers before us have harboured fantastical visions, compels us to commemorate the year with various special events. Here at the United Nations, we will be convening the Millennium Summit, which we hope will provide our shared and collective vision for the United Nations in the twenty-first century at the highest political level. We also hope to review key world conferences such as the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, held at Beijing. And of course, some of us hope that the millennium will also provide the impetus for us to reach agreement on a final package of Security Council reforms.

Indeed, we have toiled for six years since the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council — with limited success. Even though we continue to be collectively and individually committed to finding a comprehensive solution that would make the Security Council more representative, effective and transparent, delegations are also getting exhausted and drained by the repetitiveness of the debate, as we run around in circles trying to square major differences

My delegation has already made various statements in the past pointing out the contradictions and ambiguities that must be resolved before Security Council reform can take place, and we will not delve into them again today. However, we feel that as humankind throughout history has counted time in seven-day weeks and has spent the seventh day as a day of rest, we might perhaps similarly consider spending the seventh year of our work in a strategic pause. Such a respite would not mean that we have abandoned hope in reforming the Security Council. Like the seventh day, the day of rest, it would merely provide us with an opportunity to take a breather, recharge our energy, clear our minds and return to the discussion with fresh perspectives and renewed energy.

Lest our suggestion be misinterpreted as underrating the achievements of the Working Group, let me state for the record that there have been several remarkable improvements in the transparency and working methods of the Security Council over the last six years; these are undoubtedly the spin-off results of discussions in the Working Group. A non-exhaustive list of these measures would include: the announcement in the daily United Nations *Journal* of the agenda of the Security Council's informal consultations of the whole; the circulation of the Council's monthly forecast of its programme of work and provisional schedule of work to all Member States; the briefings by the President of the Security Council to non-members immediately after informal consultations; the analytical assessments provided by Council members at the end of their presidencies, which are also incorporated into the Council's annual report to the General Assembly; regular meetings of countries contributing troops to peacekeeping operations; orientation debates open to all United Nations Member States; and of course the recent innovation of holding briefings in private Council meetings that are open to non-members of the Council, which can request to attend these meetings.

While still not ideal, such innovations approximate the desire of Member States to have a Security Council that is transparent and accountable. All these advances on cluster II issues are in no way unimportant and should not be dismissed as secondary to agreements on cluster I issues. Improving the Council's working methods goes a long way towards increasing its effectiveness and transparency and, more importantly, increases the legitimacy of its positions. The legitimacy of the Security Council is important, especially for small States like Singapore, as it places the United Nations and the Security Council squarely back into the international peace and security structure.

The legitimacy of the Security Council could also be enhanced by a better utilization of the veto power. While we understand the wish of some countries to see the veto completely abolished and support the position of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) that, as a first step, the veto power should apply only to actions taken under Chapter VII of the Charter, we do not expect either to happen in the near future. What is realistic and achievable, we feel, is the proposal made by the Foreign Minister of Germany recently. In his statement at the general debate this year, Mr. Joschka Fischer said:

> "According to the Charter, the Security Council acts with the mandate, and on behalf, of all United Nations Member States. But hitherto they have not been entitled to learn why a State has exercised its right of veto. This is not only neither democratic nor transparent, but also makes it easier

> for States to veto a draft resolution unilaterally for national rather than international interests. The introduction of an obligation for a State to explain to the General Assembly why it is vetoing a draft resolution would make it more difficult to do so and thus bring about substantial progress towards using the right of veto more responsibly." (*A/54/PV.8, p. 12*)

We hope that the veto-wielding permanent members will give this modest proposal serious consideration. This, after all, applies to the veto only when it is actually exercised, and those who have been in the Council know that the "pocket veto", or the threat to use the veto, creates an uneven playing field within the Council. At the same time, many have already noted that, with the evolution of the international order, the possession of the veto often confers Great Power status, when the opposite was true at the time the United Nations was established. To lessen the disconnect between the realities of the current geopolitical structure and the distribution of power in the Security Council, it would certainly serve the interest of those who have the most to lose that they use the veto with utmost prudence.

Moreover, my delegation also strongly believes that rights must go hand in hand with responsibilities. Unbridled rights, especially one as powerful as the veto, would only lead to anarchy. Therefore, we must have a thorough and frank discussion on the special responsibility which holding the veto entails. Similarly, no reform of the Security Council will take place until the privileges and responsibilities of new permanent members are first clarified. Studied ambiguity on these questions and attempts to create different categories of permanent membership, including the concept of rotating permanent seats, will only perpetuate the impasse in the Working Group.

The impasse, caused by a refusal to look seriously at the question of the veto, has resulted in us making tired and trite arguments year after year. It is on that basis that we are suggesting that the Working Group go into hibernation for a year. Many warm-blooded animals go into hibernation through the winter months to conserve their energy and prepare for their state of activity when spring starts. Likewise, we could consider putting the Working Group into dormancy for a year to prepare for a more intensive discussion with fresh perspectives in the future.

In our analysis, reform of the Security Council will be completed swiftly and with a flurry of activity when the geopolitical conditions are ripe. Hibernation will not prevent this from happening, just as animals that stay completely dormant can emerge from hibernation very quickly in a burst of metabolic energy when the external conditions are right. It is important to bear in mind that, to be truly effective, the primary organ for the maintenance of international peace and security must reflect the new geopolitical configuration, not the other way round. Without in any way diminishing the importance of this body, we would go so far as to suggest that it is not for us here in the General Assembly to design and decide on the new geopolitical structure of the twenty-first century. No amount of clever debate and intellectual discourse in New York will reconcile the fluid power configuration in this era of globalization. We have already witnessed the marginalization of the Security Council earlier this year, when it was paralyzed in the face of mass violations of human rights in Kosovo. Similarly, in our discussion on the reform of the Council, we ignore the realities of evolving international relations at our peril.

The mere possibility of not having a debate at this session of the General Assembly has been interpreted by some as lowering the benchmark of their aspirations. Our suggestion that the Working Group hibernate for a year might be similarly misinterpreted. Hence, let me be categorical in stating our commitment to finding feasible and viable ways to reform the Security Council in order to enhance its representativity, legitimacy, effectiveness, accountability and responsibility. Moreover, as I mentioned earlier, no Power will prevent the reform of the Council when the geopolitical conditions are right. Our only fear is that arbitrarily drawing threads of consensus to devise contrived packages based on artificial deadlines would not serve the interest of the United Nations as we enter a new millennium, but will instead pull the United Nations apart. We therefore cannot but counsel patience, given the gravity of the issue at stake.

Mr. Powles (New Zealand): My delegation is very glad that you, Sir, have scheduled this debate. There is much for us to discuss. Security Council reform remains one of the most important items on our agenda and, as you have noted, your decision to hold this debate has been amply justified by the extraordinary interest it has attracted, with over 70 delegations listed to speak today.

Good progress was made in the Open-ended Working Group at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, including for the first time the adoption of a set of general observations within the Working Group's

report. While the issue of enlargement remains complex, even difficult, especially in the permanent category, there is wide agreement on the need to reform the Council's working methods and decision-making. Indeed, we would go so far as to say that there is general agreement on the need to curtail the veto if it cannot be eliminated. It was also agreed that the question of enlargement of the Council implies consideration of the question of the veto.

The positive influence of our discussions in the Working Group on the practices of the Security Council also cannot be overlooked. We have seen an increase over the past year in open meetings and the evolution of the closed-meetings format, which allows Member States non-members of the Council to be present for important briefings, such as that on Sierra Leone last week. The debate which accompanies our endeavours in the Working Group to find general agreement on a possible package of reforms therefore has its own intrinsic value.

If for that reason alone, because it is an important one, my delegation is disturbed by the suggestion that our debates in the Working Group be limited or restricted. We regard the Working Group's general discussion of the issues as a valuable component of its deliberations. With great respect, therefore, we would press strongly for the holding of a general discussion at the outset of the Working Group's deliberations, in line with previous practice.

Regarding the suggestion made by the Permanent Representative of Belgium a few moments ago that there should be informal consultations with selected countries preceding the Working Group's meetings, I would argue that the key principle of transparency requires that discussions continue in the open-ended forum of the Working Group itself.

The name of this item contains the concept of equitable representation. During our work so far, discussion of this idea has focused mainly on the need for greater representation by developing countries to better reflect today's membership, which is an important element. There is also, perhaps, a sense on the part of some of the larger financial contributors that are not permanent members that they deserve more regular or even permanent representation. This, too, needs consideration.

The Charter, of course, speaks about the need to pay due regard to the contribution made by Member States to the maintenance of international peace and security, the purposes of the Organization and also to equitable geographical distribution in selecting Member States to serve on the Council. It is the latter point that I particularly wish to emphasize today.

It is not clear how equitable geographical distribution can be achieved when the regional groupings continue to reflect the political geography of the 1960s and, indeed, a world-view which a distinguished New York Times journalist recently characterized as Victorian. Several other countries raised this matter during the general debate. Small countries that can make an excellent contribution are often shut out, especially where a political bloc inside a regional group may coordinate closely on electoral matters to their disadvantage. The current system is giving rise to new anomalies every day and needs to be looked at urgently.

We would suggest that reconfiguration of the regional groups may hold one of the keys to overall reform of the Security Council, as it did during the last reform in 1963. Reconfiguration should aim to make each group smaller and more representative. It should improve the prospects for election of all Members who wish it. And it should help make the Organization more democratic.

Addressing geographical distribution could, we believe, help us to tackle issues which have so far proved intractable. It would in no way cut across the important goal of increasing developing-country representation or increased representation by some larger contributors, if that is the wish of Member States.

We look forward to continuing to contribute to our fruitful debate in the Working Group on these and other related matters.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): May I at the outset express the appreciation and gratitude of my delegation to the Bureau of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, and in particular to Ambassadors De Saram and Dahlgren for the skill and devotion with which they have guided the Working Group's deliberations over the course of the past year.

Few questions considered by our Organization in recent years have attracted so much attention or provoked such impassioned debate as that of Security Council reform. The question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council is indeed of the most sensitive and most complex. It has weighty legal, political and strategic implications, since it affects one of the vital organs of the United Nations,

entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security and thereby vulnerable to the subtle interplay of the interests of the Powers, sometimes to the detriment of the very cause of maintaining international peace and security that it is supposed to promote.

That is why the consideration which began six years ago could not, by its very nature, engender the progress hoped for by us all. Nevertheless, it has had the merit of throwing light on the many opinions on reform of the Council and of allowing those who wish to make new proposals or reiterate earlier ones to do so.

Indeed, the intense negotiations that have been held this year in the Working Group, like those held in the past, have clearly shown that there is a broad convergence of views on some rather significant points, such as the Security Council's methods of work, and that, at the same time, apparently intractable and irreconcilable differences remain on such substantial questions as the size and membership of the Council, the mechanism for periodic review and the right of veto.

With regard to the issue of improving the transparency of the Council's work, which we feel to be of particular significance, it is important to note that progress has been made in the consideration of measures intended to improve the Council's methods of work and the transparency of its activities. Indeed, the Council has launched initiatives and taken measures — largely inspired by the serious work accomplished by the Working Group — that have somewhat enhanced the credibility of its functioning and working relations with the non-member States. The efforts of some members of the Council to improve its transparency and to introduce certain improvements in its annual report to the General Assembly — efforts that have been acknowledged and commended — clearly demonstrate this positive trend.

Similarly, the Council has shown praiseworthy readiness and receptivity to the requests of non-member States for greater information and transparency. My delegation feels, however, that these improvements are insufficient, being largely cosmetic and, above all, discretionary and therefore in need of institutionalization. Clearly, these efforts must be pursued in order to ensure greater transparency in the work of the Council, whose decisions are often taken in the course of informal consultations and in the absence of those whose fate is being decided in the most absolute opacity.

The Security Council — a hostage to fragile temporary alliances and the interplay of interests and power — has increasingly met in isolation behind closed doors, far from the spotlights, to discuss endlessly issues that are sometimes vital. Then, at the end of interminable discussion and bargaining from which those truly concerned are excluded, it issues public declarations so carefully worded that they are without substance or relevance; or else it may, as we have seen in the case of Africa, adopt resolutions that are so outdated and so uninspired that they have little effect and no real impact on the course of events.

A genuine reform of its methods of work — to which we hope the exercise led yesterday and today in the Council by the British presidency will open the way — should resolutely enable those whose contribution is necessary and viewpoint useful to be consulted, involved and, above all, heeded.

The right of veto is at the very heart of the issue of Security Council reform and very obviously represents one of the most complex and controversial issues that the Working Group on the restructuring of the Council will have to address. Indeed, since our Organization was founded, the outrageous prerogative represented by the right of veto has aroused much controversy, argument and opposition. It was clear almost from the outset that this right is consistent neither with the principle of the sovereign equality of States, nor with the spirit of healthy cooperation among them, nor, above all, with the concern of the Organization to prevent conflicts or contribute to their settlement.

The fact is that, in the framework of the reform process that our Organization is undertaking at all levels, the existence of the veto stands as one of the political and legal constraints to these reforms, particularly the democratization of the working and decision-making methods of the Council.

Today, many are speaking out against the preservation of this instrument on the grounds that it is anachronistic, antidemocratic and contrary to the principle of the legal equality of States on which our Organization is founded and which underpins the very system of international relations. Others might argue that, since the end of the cold war, recourse to the right of veto has become rare and that it is therefore no longer a threat. Nothing, however, could be more fallacious, because, by the mere fact that it exists and that all sides are aware of its existence, the veto can, at worst, be used

and, at best, subtly or brutally brandished as a deterrent weapon. For that reason alone, the veto is open to condemnation and must be fought.

For all these reasons, my delegation endorses the position taken by the Non-Aligned Movement, which aims to restrict the right of veto and ultimately to eliminate it entirely. Moreover, this position is shared by an even broader majority that believes that recourse to the veto should be confined to decisions taken under Chapter VII of the Charter.

Although there remain differences that have been hitherto difficult to reconcile on other matters of substance concerning the size and composition of the Council — matters that are both sensitive and controversial — general agreement exists on the need to enlarge the Security Council in order to ensure more balanced geographical representation. Indeed, all agree to recognize that, in the wake of substantial upheavals on the international scene, the membership and present structure that were dictated by the world situation of 1945 have become obsolete and anachronistic and do not reflect the political and economic realities of our era nor, *a fortiori*, those of the coming millennium.

The need to enhance the Council's credibility through in-depth reform must be based on the principles of democracy, sovereign equality of States and equitable geographic representation. Furthermore, a reformed Security Council should be transparent in its work and take greater account of the interests of all Member States on whose behalf it is supposed to act, since all Member States share, in one way or another, the burden of maintaining peace. In this respect, Council reform encompassing enlargement of both categories of membership, with the powers and prerogatives accruing thereto devolved without discrimination, would help to enhance the effectiveness of its action, lend greater legitimacy to its decisions and secure it broader support from the international community.

Along this line, it is gratifying to recall that these general principles, to which we unreservedly subscribe, were reiterated by the Non-Aligned Movement at its Durban summit. In fact, they represent the most reasonable basis for achieving the anticipated results of this reform, which must reflect the universal character of our Organization.

It is precisely for this reason that my delegation fully endorses the position of the Non-Aligned Movement advocating an increase in the Council membership by not less than 11 members. Likewise, I wish to reaffirm our attachment to the common African position claiming for Africa the allocation of two rotating permanent seats with the same prerogatives enjoyed by the other permanent members, as well as some additional non-permanent seats. We feel that the principle of rotation, which has always been invoked and respected whenever the issue of seats for Africa has been raised, is the most democratic and fair way of securing credible representation, accepted by all in the Security Council, for Africa.

In this respect, we feel it essential that the interests of all States and regions be taken into serious consideration in this historic and unprecedented review, which, given its vital importance to the future of our Organization and its impact on international relations, should not be confined to a predetermined timetable. Furthermore, any attempt to impose a premature decision taken rashly and in haste would have very serious consequences for this extremely delicate process, to which all States Members of our Organization attach particular importance and attention. That is why feel that the general agreement of the Member States, as defined in General Assembly resolution 48/26, is necessary to ensuring genuine Council reform. If general agreement is impossible to achieve — and there is every indication that it will not be — resolution 53/30, adopted by consensus, definitively swept aside any doubts as to the procedure to be followed in taking decisions on Council reform and defining the terms and conditions under which it can be approved — that is, with the affirmative vote of at least two thirds of the Members of the General Assembly.

This being so, all efforts to ensure true reform of our Organization, however praiseworthy and important they may be, will remain incomplete so long as they are not accompanied by substantial changes aimed at reforming the various organs of the Organization and their interrelationship, which continue to obey the logic and legacy of the world as it was following the Second World War. In this respect, my delegation believes that reform of the United Nations should go hand in hand with a better balance among its various organs, in particular between the Security Council and the General Assembly, which must be strengthened and perhaps even rehabilitated in its role and function as the democratic deliberating body at the very heart of our Organization.

Security Council reform is clearly a politically very sensitive process that requires us to redouble our efforts and imaginative impulses, not to mention our courage in

consolidating the progress achieved and resolving problems that remain. My delegation hopes that the debates on this important issue will be continued in transparency and serenity, far removed from the logic of sterile confrontation and without a restrictive and imposed timetable. My delegation is ready to be involved in the pursuit of our collective effort to reform the Council and make it a renewed and democratized body capable of taking up the challenges of the present and of facing those of the future.

Mr. Satoh (Japan): Mr. President, I would like to express our appreciation for your leadership in convening this meeting on Security Council reform and also for the very thoughtful and enlightening statement you have just made. I am confident that this meeting will help advance the cause of Security Council reform so that the United Nations will be able to fully meet the challenges of the next century.

I also wish to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Mr. Opertti for his guidance on Security Council reform during the fifty-third session. Our appreciation also goes to Ambassador de Saram of Sri Lanka and Ambassador Dahlgren of Sweden, the two Vice-Chairmen of the last Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council. Moreover, I want to thank them both for their acceptance of the co-vice-chairmanship for the next round of the Open-ended Working Group.

We have to admit that views still differ on some aspects of Security Council reform, particularly on such issues as how large the expanded membership should be, how the new permanent members are to be selected, and what to do about the question of the veto.

But it is all too clear that if the Security Council is to be able to meet the challenges the international community will face in the next century, the Council must represent the world of today, not the world of 1945. Accordingly, it is imperative that the permanent membership be expanded by adding developing and industrialized nations. Such an expansion of the permanent membership is essential in order to strengthen the Council's legitimacy and effectiveness and to enhance the confidence of the international community in the Council.

It is also important that the non-permanent membership be increased as well. As I proposed last year, the expanded Security Council should have a total membership of 24, including five new permanent and four new non-permanent members.

The decision-making process of the Council, including the question of the veto, must also be improved in order to make the Council's activities more effective and accountable. In the light of recent experiences with regard to Iraq and Kosovo, we must not turn our eyes away from the various implications the veto could have for the Council's functioning.

Improved working methods and greater transparency in the Council's work are also necessary, and I welcome the progress made so far by the Working Group in this area. But improved working methods must be part of a comprehensive package of reforms, which must include the expansion of both categories of membership, permanent and non-permanent.

Early next year we will embark upon the seventh round of meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform. That round of meetings will lead us to the historic Millennium Summit and Millennium Assembly, which will focus on the role of the United Nations in the next century.

Given the differences of views on some of the key issues, it may be too ambitious for us to expect that the Millennium Summit and Millennium Assembly will complete the work of Security Council reform. But we must make every effort in the coming months in order to let these historic events generate a strong political momentum for the reform of the Council. Only by doing so will we be able to discharge our shared responsibility of making the Security Council a truly viable organ in the coming century.

Mr. Baban (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting, in the hope that the debate on this item will bring about a positive agreement on the matter.

My delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council for the work it accomplished during the previous session of the General Assembly. We thank in particular Mr. Didier Opertti, the Chairman of the Working Group, and the co-Chairmen,

Ambassador Hans Dahlgren and Ambassador John de Saram.

The intensive participation in the debate highlights the importance that we all attach to the reform of the Security Council. We are convinced that there is no point in reforming the United Nations unless the Security Council is also reformed, so that each structure reflects the current international situation. The report of the Working Group (A/53/47) indicates that some progress has been achieved in matters related to improving the Council's methods of work. The report also indicates that differences remain on numerous crucial matters.

We are hopeful that the Group, in its upcoming meetings, will be able to overcome all the obstacles impeding the achievement of comprehensive reform of the Security Council. We also hope that it will fulfil the tasks entrusted to it by resolution 48/26 so that the Council will be more representative in its membership, more democratic in its resolutions and clearer in its working methods.

In the discussions held over the past five years here and in the Working Group, a clear consensus developed that the present structure of the Security Council does not reflect the current state of the world. The increase in the membership of the United Nations since the Security Council was last enlarged constitutes the legal basis for calling for an increase in the membership of the Council. We agree with that argument and reiterate that it is extremely important to enlarge the Security Council so that it reflects the actual membership of the Organization.

In principle, my country would prefer that the increase be confined to the non-permanent members. However, if there is a genuine need for an increase in the category of the permanent membership, that increase should not take place at the expense of the countries of the South, which constitute the majority of the United Nations membership. The principle of equitable geographical distribution should be taken into consideration; it should also be noted that some regional groups, such as the African Group, are under-represented.

Here we would like to reiterate the common African position, which calls for allocating two permanent seats to the African continent, with the same privileges as the other permanent members. The States of the continent must be free to determine how to fill those seats, in accordance with specific criteria.

Mere change in the structure of the Security Council is not sufficient. We believe that an integrated reform process requires that the restructuring of the Council should be part and parcel of an integrated resolution that leads to rectifying the imbalances in the constitution of the Council and improving its methods of work and procedures to enhance its credibility and accountability.

The report of the Working Group indicates provisional agreement on some measures to improve the Council's methods of work. We share those views but are concerned about the fact that the agreement leaves out very important issues. These include the relationship of the Security Council with other major organs such as the General Assembly and the International Court of Justice.

It is very strange that the Working Group has not been able to agree on a text that would give non-members of the Council the right to attend the Council's informal consultations when they are a party to the conflict under discussion. The Charter guarantees this right explicitly in Article 31. We believe that the Security Council should carry out its activities through open meetings, with the participation of States interested in the items on the agenda. The Council should draft its resolutions only after hearing the views and positions of those States.

The current way of doing things is not correct. The actual work takes place in the informal consultations, which are held behind closed doors, away from the eyes and ears of the overwhelming majority of the United Nations membership, on whose behalf, according to the Charter, the Council is supposed to act. However, our position should not be interpreted as an absolute objection to the holding of informal consultations. We understand that conducting consultations within a specific group may facilitate the search for a solution in situations requiring urgent action by the Council.

What we wish to emphasize is that these consultations should be held only within the narrowest limits and in very exceptional circumstances, as required, not as is the case at present. Informal meetings of the Security Council have become the rule, not the exception. Frequent resort to them could destroy the transparent nature of the Council's work by concealing its activities from the international community and by fostering doubt and scepticism. This has harmed, and would continue to harm, the Council's credibility.

In the framework of the reform process, we believe that it is very important to elaborate final guidelines

governing the work of the Security Council. It is not acceptable for the Council to continue to undertake its activities in accordance with provisional rules of procedure elaborated 50 years ago that do not cover all the Council's activities, particularly with respect to the informal consultations.

Reconsideration of the right of veto is crucial to the process of Security Council reform because that right directly affects the resolutions adopted therein and the interests of Member States. My country has repeatedly stressed its objection to the retention of this privilege on the grounds that it runs counter to the principle set out in the Charter of sovereign equality among States. It is contrary to the values of justice and undermines the principles of democracy. It has been misused and harnessed to serve the narrow national self-interest of those who enjoy it.

We have heard many arguments aimed at justifying the retention of the veto. These include the argument that bearing a greater share of the expenditures of the Organization is one of the criteria of permanent membership. This criterion has not actually been applied. Had this been the case, many countries could have paid to enjoy this privilege. Even if we accepted this criterion, we would have to question its validity, as there are permanent members that refuse to pay their arrears to the budget of the Organization.

It has also been said that the veto privilege was granted to those States bearing greater responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Once again, we feel that there is a contradiction in the conduct of those States that use this privilege to serve their own interests and threaten to use it in situations that are contrary to those interests, even if they command the support of the majority of the Member States.

The fact is that those States that emerged as victors in 1945 arrogated to themselves special privileges. The United Nations is different now from what it was five decades ago. Among the most salient manifestations of this difference is the fact that the majority of Member States did not belong to the Organization at that time, nor did they have any say in what privileges those five States arrogated to themselves. I should like to take this opportunity to reaffirm that my country has, for more than a quarter century, called for the abolition of the veto privilege. It would be pointless to reform the Security Council if the veto privilege is retained and made the preserve of the few, who use it to impose their will and impede the implementation of the will of the international community.

The Open-ended Working Group has informed us about its work it did during the previous session. At this session, the Group will continue its work under the able leadership of the co-Chairmen. We hope that it will reach an early and successful conclusion and that all States Members of the United Nations will accept the measures it proposes on restructuring the Security Council and on genuinely legitimizing the Council's methods of work.

Our position should not be interpreted to mean that we are inclined to set a timetable for completing this very important process. In this connection, we uphold the position expressed by the Non-Aligned Movement at its twelfth summit that efforts to restructure the Council must not be constrained by a predetermined time-frame and that consensus must be reached in order to finally resolve this question.

Mr. Sharma (India): As the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly draws to a close, we are once again considering all aspects of the question of increase in the membership of the Security Council and endeavouring to effectively address other matters related to the reform of the Council.

Six years have elapsed since we began discussing this vital question in the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Related Matters, and yet, even as a new century dawns, consensus continues to elude us. The time has surely come for some introspection on our part. Perhaps one of the reasons it has taken us so long is simply because, somewhere along the line, we lost sight of what it was that we had set out to do. We need once again to address the fundamental question of whether Security Council reform is an essential prerequisite for the better functioning of our Organization. We believe that the answer to this question is unequivocally in the affirmative.

We have come a long way since discussions began on this issue. It would be unrealistic and indeed unfair to call our discussions an exercise in futility. We are not reform pessimists. National interests on such a vital question may take time to reconcile. What is essential for the success of negotiations is investment of political will, which is not yet in evidence in the measure required. Then again, we need to ask ourselves if we should be

aspiring to a utopian solution, or if we are prepared to accept a less-than-ideal solution that could take into account current global realities and yet provide to the Security Council the balance and expansion it so vitally and urgently requires, the necessity for which we have elaborated upon in several previous statements.

The expansion and reform of the Security Council must equip it to face the challenges of the next century. A comprehensive package, which includes an expansion of the Council's membership, improvement in its working methods and changes in the process of decision-making, has become imperative. Any attempt to limit this exercise to a piecemeal expansion, to the detriment of developing countries, would not only weaken the Council's credibility further, but would also nullify the basic need to impart greater democratization and transparency to the Council's working. The impact of the absence of representation of developing countries as permanent members is seen everywhere: on the countries and problems which are before the Security Council, on the Council as an institution, on the permanent members seeking to resolve the crisis and, indeed, on the United Nations itself, which ultimately has to shoulder the blame when the Council's decisions go awry. We have had occasion to make this point at greater length in the Open-ended Working Group.

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which is the single largest group of Member States, with 114 members, continues to be unrepresented in the permanent members' category. This anomaly needs to be corrected. NAM should also have an enhanced presence in the non-permanent category.

While, on the one hand, the Council has evaded its role or let it be usurped, on the other, there are calls for far greater activism on its part to effectively tackle humanitarian crises. We have serious reservations over the Council's addressing issues beyond its competence; unless a humanitarian crisis clearly poses a threat to international peace and security, the Council has no role in attempts to resolve it. While this is a general principle that should be respected, the composition of and the balance of power in the Council, so heavily weighted against developing countries, is an added cause of concern because the objects of humanitarian activism can only be countries in the developing world.

A Security Council which is unrepresentative and undemocratic can neither preserve international peace and security nor legitimately speak on behalf of the general membership. It should certainly not try to stretch the limits of what is politically acceptable to the general membership.

Partial solutions are no solutions at all. After striving for over six years, if we were to agree to an expansion of the Security Council in the non-permanent category only or if we were to make cosmetic changes in its working methods, we would be doing a disservice not only to ourselves, but also to the Organization as a whole. Instead of addressing the key issues, we would be skirting them and perpetuating an international system characterized by inequity.

We should resist the temptation of taking the easier option and promoting agreement only on those issues on which there already exists a broad measure of convergence. Cluster I and cluster II issues are equally important and have to be addressed together. NAM has consistently argued that expansion and reform of the Security Council should be integral parts of a common package. Any attempt to promote one at the cost of the other not only is a negation of the NAM position, but would also undermine the mandate given by the General Assembly to consider all aspects of the question of the increase in the membership of the Security Council and to effectively address other matters related to the reform of the Council.

We also believe that creating a third category of membership based on rotation would not meet the aspirations of developing countries, as they would continue to be subjected to a discriminatory regime. However, we would like to reiterate that we respect the position of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). As the African Group has itself emphasized, their option is not intended to serve as a model for others.

Another point that bears reiteration is that any increase in permanent membership should be guided by objective, and not subjective, selective or arbitrary criteria. The manner of selection of all new permanent members should be uniform. The General Assembly is the forum which should elect new permanent members. There should be no constraint on the role or authority of the General Assembly in this regard. All new permanent members should be designated together.

On the question of periodic review of an enlarged Security Council, we believe that such an exercise would inherently promote greater accountability and responsibility among members of the Council and should have universal application.

An inhibiting factor in the process of the Council's expansion has been the reluctance of some to show flexibility on the size of an expanded Council, preferring presumed comfort in numbers over effectiveness. The latter can be achieved only by an expanded Council, which draws its legitimacy by commanding greater support of the member States. The difference in numbers is such that the process threatens to resemble a debate of scholastic theology.

India has steadfastly contributed to all aspects of the Organization's activities. We believe that, on any objective grounds, India would be considered as qualified for permanent membership of an expanded Security Council, whenever the membership finds this decision posed before it. The pace is for the membership to decide, but we believe that undue deceleration in the consideration of this vital question is not in our collective interest.

We welcome the adoption by consensus of resolution 53/30 by the General Assembly last year. This has clearly laid down the voting threshold for adoption of any resolution or decision on Security Council restructuring. With this procedural issue behind us, the way ahead would be to address all the issues in a comprehensive manner and evolve the broadest possible agreement on any package. It is heartening to note that a tentative beginning was made in the Open-ended Working Group this year, which included in its report a new chapter on general observations. We could seek to build on the consensus reached on elements contained in the report. Moreover, we would like to encourage you, Sir, to try and ascertain the views of all member States. A beginning was made by your predecessor and there is a need to carry this process forward.

We look forward to the resumption of deliberations in the Open-ended Working Group next year with a view to moving forward discussions on Security Council reform. If we generate the necessary political will, there are no obstacles that are insurmountable. The challenges that confront us should only redouble our determination to press on. This century has been an eloquent testimony to the limitless expanse of human potential and creativity. Hurdles should not deter us. We have great faith in your leadership, Sir, and in the collective wisdom of this truly universal Organization of ours.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, we want to share with you what almost all of us have learned in the seven years during which we have been considering this vitally important question.

First of all, we have learned that the systems of 1945 are not, under today's criteria, acceptable to the great majority of countries. When I speak of the systems of 1945, I am referring to the existence of members who are not accountable to the rest, those who have the right of veto. In fact, no one wants more unaccountable members. What's more, some have pointed out that it seems that there are already too many. It is, therefore, very interesting that under your initiative, we are beginning to consider specifically the creation of regional seats. The clearest case of this is the European Union. With a unified currency, with unified political, economic and foreign policies, with defined borders and now with the planned military deterrence force of its own, it is obvious that a regional seat is a logical necessity and consequence. In other words, if somewhat more than 25 per cent of the gross global product, not to mention the enormous cultural and historic wealth of Europe, is oriented towards a regional seat, this is a message, it seems to me, on which we must all reflect.

Secondly, we have learned that any real reform needs to be carried out on the basis of transparency and democratic principles. The Security Council has established as its mandate a request for greater democracy for each and every country that is involved in its agenda. It should begin by practising what it preaches, by avoiding a lack of democracy in its own composition and procedures.

We have also learned that it will be extremely difficult for any parliament to agree that its country should remain forever excluded from participation in a future system of collective security. It also seems to us that few parliaments could agree, even indirectly, to an increase in permanent members in accordance with the 1945 systems.

We have learned that the establishment of new permanent seats directly violates the right of all to elect others and to be elected to participate in the system of collective security. This in particular affects the countries with more limited resources. We have learned, in addition, that no country is more capable than another of deciding on questions of international security, much less in perpetuity. To think otherwise is not serious at the end of the millennium.

As a result of all of these lessons and realities and the worldwide trend towards democracy and transparency, Argentina continues to support the creation of an open rotation system in which no country can be

discriminated against in its region if it wishes to join the Security Council. It has been said that a system of rotation is unrealistic and that it may lead to unjust situations. Quite honestly, the most unjust and unrealistic procedure would be to multiply the privileges and discrimination that only the end of the war in 1945 could justify.

It has also been said that no region must be under-represented. For that purpose, there is no need to add new permanent members, but rather to change the present architecture of the Council and never add more unacceptable situations at this stage of history. That is not where the solution resides. Adding greater privileges does not help the ideals of the United Nations. On the contrary, it harms them and leaves them devoid of content.

The greatest room for participation that we can achieve on the Council must be shared. It seems to us that it is because of the insistence of some on obtaining a monopoly that we still have not reached general agreement on the question of a category of new members. It is because of this obstruction that the United Nations is profoundly divided, and this impacts negatively on its work.

In this context, my delegation wonders whether we should still cling to the categories of the past or whether it would be better to try to construct a system of collective security that is truly new and in keeping with this world and its new realities, even the need to reshape regional groups. If this is not possible, and preserving the progress and positions that already exist, we should try, provisionally, merely to expand the number of elected members of the Council.

It has been suggested that there is stagnation in this subject because of the obstructionism of a minority, which is preventing a majority from reaching agreement. It is not clear that this is so. We must not allow ourselves to be tempted by procedures that already failed in the past. There should be no informal consultations arbitrarily excluding or including members. Nor should we attempt any artificial division of the group of issues, for example by postponing the question of the veto. We reiterate that the general agreement that must be reached by the Working Group is on each and every item in its mandate. It is inadmissible for a question as important as the veto, on which there is indeed general agreement, to be separated from the remainder of the issues.

Fortunately, the possibility of this artificial division has disappeared with the agreement that we reached in the last session and which is reflected in subparagraph (h) of paragraph 27 of the report of the Working Group, document A/53/47, in which we decided that the question of equitable representation and increase in membership and the question of working methods should be considered as integral parts of a common package. We also concluded, in subparagraph (f) of paragraph 27 that the question of enlargement of the Security Council implies the consideration of the question of the veto.

We still seem to be far removed from the time when the countries that hold to extreme positions evolve toward greater participation for all. The best way of progressing is to abandon these positions and to seek solutions that are in keeping with this end of a millennium. This is, I believe, the most valuable lesson of this century. If we are not prepared to understand that the historic circumstances of today do not allow for insistence on the systems of 1945, then the tasks of the Working Group will remain difficult. It must be understood that, fortunately, conditions do not exist for a repetition of the conferences of Casablanca, Teheran or Yalta. The complexities involved in the reform of the most powerful body in the history of international relations make it impossible to deal with all of the essential issues within the space of this plenary. For that reason, my delegation reserves its right to refer back to these issues when the work of the Working Group begins. It is in that forum that we need to seek solutions that are acceptable to all, solutions that can be implemented, because this strengthens the ideals and the interests of the United Nations.

Lastly, I wish to point out that some winds of transparency are already beginning to blow in the sphere of the Council. We hope that those winds will not be delayed.

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): The Open-ended Working Group on reform of the Security Council established by the Assembly is entering its seventh year, having made but little progress towards the fulfilment of its mandate. In the absence of real political will and commitment, it is unlikely that another seven years will alter the dismal performance we have recorded so far. The challenge we face is to reinvigorate this process we have embarked upon and to commit ourselves to its timely conclusion. This is the challenge that both this Assembly and the Working Group face. In facing this challenge, we cannot afford to fail.

We cannot afford to fail because as the world has changed. Because this Organization has itself evolved, the Security Council cannot afford to be seen as an anachronistic institution of the past. If it is, the confidence and indeed the legitimacy it must obtain from all the Member States will suffer, and so will the United Nations itself.

As we prepare to enter the new millennium and prepare for the Millennium Summit and Assembly, we cannot lose sight of our goal and commitment to reform the Security Council with a view to broadening its representation and enhancing its efficiency and legitimacy. We recognize that the Council has taken positive measures designed to enhance the transparency of its working methods. We commend the Council for such a move and encourage them to press further, for there remains greater room for improvement, as has often been pointed out in the Working Group on Council reform.

Our desire and objective in reforming the Security Council are not a flight of fancy. They are born in our legitimate need to further democratize the Council and enable it to reflect the current reality following the end of the cold war and the increase of membership within our ranks. They also arise from the fact that while the Security Council has a global mandate, its present composition is far less representative of the global constituency of the United Nations. Sustaining this imbalance brings into question the letter and spirit of Article 24 of the Charter concerning the responsibilities we, as Member States of the United Nations, have conferred upon the Security Council and the idea that in carrying out its duties the Council acts on behalf of the Member States.

Of late the agenda of the Security Council has predominantly pertained to issues of interest to developing countries, especially Africa. Yet these countries remain grossly under- represented among the permanent members in the Council. It is in this regard that we see the overriding objective of Council reform to be that of bringing about its greater democratization by bringing about a balance of representation. We see this as a process of justice and of greater empowerment of the Council.

While we note the dismal performance of the Working Group, we also note that its work has not been in vain. In our view, there is a sufficiently large majority in support of expanding Council membership in both permanent and non-permanent categories, and in both instances including members from developing and developed countries. This is a development we need to recognize and welcome.

Needless to say, we also recognize that there continue to be strong views on the scope of the expansion. We believe that with the necessary political will these differences can be surmounted so that the Working Group can forge ahead. In our view, the scope of expansion as proposed by the Organization of African Unity and the Non-Aligned Movement continues to offer an acceptable range of representation and would not compromise the Council's efficiency.

It must also be pointed out that part of the problem the Working Group has faced has to do with the manner in which we have allowed ourselves to constrain its working mechanisms. We have often expressed our confidence to the Chairman and his Bureau, but turned around and condemned them for subverting transparency the moment they sought to consult with us bilaterally or in groups, in total disregard of the fact that the outcome of such consultations is invariably presented before the Working Group for discussion. In our view, we need to exercise more confidence and trust in those we entrust with responsibility, especially when their efforts are meant to facilitate our joint endeavours and are, in any event, ultimately subject to our endorsement. Indeed it makes a mockery of that position, given that all other processes here at the United Nations allow a multiplicity of consultations, including lunches and dinners, to mention but two.

My delegation continues to see the mandate of the Working Group as producing a package. Therefore, we would not be inclined to support measures designed to identify certain aspects of this process in order to subject them to a separate process. We see the issues on the table as being intrinsically integrated and see none as being insurmountable. The critical element is political will.

The Working Group can still make considerable progress when it resumes its session. However, whether it does or does not will have very little to do with the President or the Bureau. If it fails, it will only be because we have failed, individually and collectively, to live up to the challenges facing us as Member States of the United Nations.

Mr. Fulci (Italy): We began our current round of discussions of Security Council reform way back in 1993. Since then we have been through many ups and downs, trials and tribulations, opportunities and difficulties that at times turned our exercise into a sort of Via Dolorosa. The fact remains that, after seven long years, general agreement still eludes us.

However, the most important achievement in these years took place in November 1998, when an essential principle of democracy was reaffirmed in this very Hall — the principle that no resolution or decision on the question of Security Council reform shall be adopted without the affirmative vote of at least two thirds of the members of the General Assembly. This means two thirds of all Member States and not just two thirds of those present and voting. That historic decision prevents any attempt at circumventing the provisions of our Charter.

All of us agree that the Security Council should be made more representative. In 1963, at the time of the first and last enlargement of the Council, there were 113 Member States; today, there are 188. This is the new reality that demands a more representative Security Council one more representative in democratic, not outdated, oligarchic terms. We certainly need reform, but a reform for the better, not for the worse.

On the issue of enlargement, many fundamental questions remain unanswered. Some claim that there is wide support for expansion in both categories, permanent and non-permanent seats, or, to call them by their real names, non-elective and elective seats. Yet, what is truly meant by "expansion in both categories"? New fixed or new rotating permanent seats? How many seats would go to each regional group? How many would go to the under-represented regions? Why should we introduce yet another category: the industrialized nations? And, then, would new permanent seats be endowed with the veto or would we be adding to the existing classes of countries yet a third: permanent members without the veto?

Furthermore, as Europe becomes economically and politically more integrated, the idea of a European Union presence in the Security Council is steadily gaining ground in many quarters. I was delighted to hear our colleague from Argentina just mention this. Should not this new reality — the "European reality" — be accounted for in the reform?

Our friends from Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean are quite right when they claim permanent seats for themselves. We understand their reasons. We know full well that the great majority of them are thinking of rotating permanent seats and not fixed permanent members. Who, indeed, could honestly disagree with such a legitimate, democratic expectation?

But let me underline that there should be rotating permanent seats for all regional groups and no additional fixed permanent members. What we must strive for is more democracy. We would not be happy with an Orwellian formula that would increase the number of members more equal than others. Above all, the enhancement of the international status of two or five countries cannot — I repeat — cannot be trumped up as a renewal of the United Nations.

Meanwhile, despite the passage of seven lean years, the fat years seem to be nowhere in sight. In opening this debate, Sir, you rightly invited delegations to offer constructive ideas and help to move the process forward. In this regard, I am glad to say that Italy fully shares the fall-back position of the 100 members of the Non-Aligned Movement, proposing an increase for the time being in non-permanent seats. Unfortunately, this proposal is held hostage to the intransigence of some delegations that probably have a different agenda.

Increasing the number of elective seats by five or six would help alleviate, promptly and considerably, the serious problem of under-representation. Needless to say, the new elective seats should be assigned primarily to those regions that are currently under-represented in the Council. For example, Africa, our largest geographic group, could at long last count on one elective seat for each of its five subregional groups. Similar benefits would derive to Asia, as well as to Latin America and the Caribbean. This, of course, is only one of many hypotheses, but one that, after so many fruitless years, should perhaps begin to be seriously considered.

I would like to make a few remarks on the *vexata quaestio* of the veto. Events in recent months have underscored the negative effect of the veto power on the Security Council's ability to tackle international crises promptly and effectively. Time and again, the veto, or the mere threat of its use, has paralysed the Security Council, thereby compromising its authority and credibility. Public opinion and the media clearly perceive this danger, perhaps better than others. More and more frequently, they voice their doubts about the Council's enduring relevance as the main organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. This is why the issue of the veto is central to any deliberation on Security Council reform. In the eyes of my delegation and, I believe, of many others, it would be unthinkable to have a reform without at the same time addressing and settling the question of the veto. If we were to take a vote now, we would certainly not need exit polls to learn the outcome.

As we look towards the road ahead, Sir, allow me to say how much we appreciate and admire your commitment to the goal of true reform and your desire for transparency and democracy. These feelings lead me to respectfully bring to your attention the following two concerns. First, all Member States are equally interested in this vital exercise. For this reason, the discussion of the reform should always take place inside the Open-ended Working Group, giving everyone — absolutely everyone — a chance to participate. Our second concern is the old idea of a comprehensive package that haunts our proceedings from time to time. Let us not close our eyes to reality. Some parts of such a package remain far — very far — from general agreement, especially when it comes to the question of permanent membership.

On the other hand, other elements of the package, such as the Council's working methods and transparency, are closer to consensus. Would it not be advisable to avoid an approach that would hold hostage the concrete results almost achieved in cluster II to the very contentious cluster I? The great work done to date in this specific field by our two eminent Vice Chairmen, Ambassador Dahlgren of Sweden and Ambassador De Saram of Sri Lanka, should not be lost. Therefore, Sir, we warmly welcome your decision to reconfirm these Vice-Chairmen.

There is no doubt that we must take action to restore faith in the United Nations and in the Security Council. However, this action has to be in keeping with the trends of history, which have consistently moved away from oligarchy and towards democracy, away from privilege and towards equality and the rule of law. At no stage should we make the error of moving against the tides of history. As President Clinton of the United States said in a recent message to the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA): "Across the globe, democracy is on the rise". And the globe is represented right here at the United Nations.

For its part, Italy will continue to adamantly oppose any attempts against democracy, equitable representation, transparency and efficiency. On the basis of these principles, we remain deeply committed to the reform of the Security Council. In the course of our discussions, I have sometimes had to voice my dissent, even with some of our closest partners and traditional allies. But one point should be clear: from this rostrum, I have always faithfully presented to members of this world Assembly the position of the Italian Government, which enjoys the full support of the Italian Parliament and of Italian public opinion. Italy will continue to fight for democracy, convinced as it is that democracy is necessary, reasonable and politically attainable at the United Nations, in the interests not only of my country, but also of Europe and of the entire international community.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.